

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane, in particular for a tower crane, combining ballast blocks-(3) that can be stacked onto a base frame (39) of the crane, and a gripper-(2) for handling the ballast blocks-(3), the gripper (2)-being designed to be connected, during use, to a handling means, this device comprising means of nonpermanent connection, by hooking, between the gripper (2) and a ballast block-(3), and also means for centering the stacked ballast blocks (3) relative to one another, characterized in that the aforementioned means of nonpermanent connection comprise two opposed gripping hooks-(15, 16) mounted pivotably, about horizontal pins-(10), in the end regions of a lifting beam (4) of the gripper (2), each gripping hook-(15, 16) having, on one side of its pivot pin-(10), a hooking catch (17) designed to interact with a transverse pin (35) placed in a corresponding housing (33) of a ballast block-(3), and, on the other side of its pivot pin-(10), a rear part (18) attached to a sling (27, 28) by which the gripper (2) is suspended from the hoisting cable, each gripping hook (15, 16) being assigned a lock (21, 22) that is borne by the lifting beam-(4) and designed to temporarily keep the corresponding gripping hook (15, 16)-in the position in which the transverse pin (35) is released.
2. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to Claim 1, characterized in that the lifting beam-(4) is constituted by two parallel bars or profiles-(5, 6) that are secured to another with a longitudinal gap-(7) left between them, so as to form, at the two ends of the lifting beam-(4), clevises serving for the articulation of the two suspension hooks-(15, 16).

3. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to Claim 2, characterized in that vertical protective plates are fastened onto the two bars profiles ~~(5, 6)~~ of the lifting beam ~~(4)~~, these plates protecting the region in which the rear part ~~(18)~~ of the gripping hooks ~~(15, 16)~~ travels.
4. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~any of Claims 1 to 3~~, claim 1, characterized in that the rear part ~~(18)~~ of each gripping hook ~~(15, 16)~~ itself constitutes, or bears, a counterweight.
5. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 4~~, claim 1, characterized in that each sling ~~(27, 28)~~ forms an angle of less than 180° with the longitudinal axis of the corresponding gripping hook ~~(15, 16)~~.
6. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 5~~, claim 1, characterized in that each lock ~~(21, 22)~~ of the gripper ~~(2)~~ is a lock mounted pivotably about a horizontal pin ~~(11)~~ borne by the lifting beam, the lock ~~(21, 22)~~ having a bent shape, with a lower part ~~(23)~~ forming a counterweight, and an upper part ~~(24)~~ that forms a locking catch and is provided with a ramp ~~(24)~~ intended to interact with a control finger ~~(19)~~ borne by the rear part of the corresponding gripper hook ~~(15, 16)~~.
7. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 6~~, claim 1, characterized in that the ballast blocks ~~(3)~~, made essentially of concrete, each comprise two metal grip parts ~~(33)~~, embedded in the concrete, that each delimit a housing capable of partially receiving a gripping hook ~~(15, 16)~~, each metal grip part ~~(33)~~ being provided with a transverse pin ~~(35)~~ passing through the housing delimited by said part and designed to interact with the locking catch ~~(17)~~ of a gripping hook ~~(15, 16)~~ engaged in this housing.
8. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to Claim 7, characterized in that two right-angle positioning brackets ~~(8, 9)~~ are fastened under the lifting

beam-(4), these brackets being designed to interact, respectively, with the upper edges of the housing delimited by the two grip parts-(33) of a ballast block-(3).

9. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 8~~, claim 1, characterized in that the means for centering the stacked ballast blocks (3) relative to one another comprise, on each ballast block-(3), conical centering pegs-(37) that protrude above the upper face of the ballast block-(3), and corresponding housing (38) of flared shape, in particular of conical or pyramidal shape, that open out in the lower face of the ballast block-(3).

10. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to Claim 9, characterized in that one of the housings (38) of flared shape of each ballast block (3) has the general shape of a pyramid of rectangular base elongated in the longitudinal direction of this ballast block-(3).

11. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~Claims 2 and 9 together~~, claim 2, characterized in that the centering pegs-(37) and the corresponding housings (38) belong to metal centering parts (34), each metal centering part (34) extending vertically over one side of a metal grip part (33) and being attached to the latter (at 36) to constitute a single metal insert (31, 32) embedded in the concrete of the ballast block-(3).

12. (Currently Amended) Ballasting device for a crane according to ~~any one of Claims 1 to 11~~, claim 1, characterized in that the lifting beam (4) is provided at its ends with rings-(12, 13) designed to receive a guide rope-(14) that can be used while handling a ballast block (3) hooked in under the lifting beam-(4).